

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 02031 01 OF 02 131547Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----003819 131549Z /43
O 131410
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1219
INFO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2031

NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

WHITE HOUSE FOR BRZEZINSKI

Z.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PEPR, XF, IS
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH BEGIN: DEMARCHE ON "WITHDRAWAL ON ALL FRONTS",
242 AND ALL THAT

REF: TEL AVIV 2017

1. SUMMARY: DURING MEETING WITH BEGIN EVENING FEBRUARY 11
HE INTRODUCED SECOND MATTER HE WISHED TO DISCUSS, I.E.,
SECRETARY'S REFERENCE TO "WITHDRAWAL ON ALL FRONTS". (FIRST
WAS SECRETARY'S PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT ON SIANI
SETTLEMENTS REPORTED REFTEL.) HE SAID U.S. POSITION
CONSTITUTES UNILATERAL CHANGE IN 242, UNDERTAKEN
WITHOUT PRIOR CONSULTATION. I ASSURED HIM OUR POSITIONS
HAVE NOT CHANGED AND ARE WELL KNOWN TO GOI. I ALSO TOLD
HIM WE ASSUMED THAT HIS ADHERENCE TO 242 INCLUDED PRINCIPLE
OF WITHDRAWAL ON ALL FRONTS, AS WAS THE CASE WITH PRECEDING
ISRAELI GOVERNMENTS. IF NOT, THIS WAS A SERIOUS PROBLEM.
CONVERSATION DEVELOPED INTO LONG AND PLAINTIVE DISCOURSE
BY BEGIN ABOUT HOW SADAT HAD SWAYED AMERICAN
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OPINION--PRESUMABLY INCLUDING OFFICIAL OPINION--WHEREAS
ISRAEL HAD NOT EVEN RECEIVED AN ADEQUATE HEARING. I
ATTEMPTED TO SET RECORD STRAIGHT ON CONSTANCY AND FAIRNESS
OF OUR POSITIONS AND ON ISRAEL'S POSITIONS BEING WELL KNOWN;
I REMINDED HIM THAT WHEREAS WE SUPPORT ISRAELI POSITIONS
ON MANY QUESTIONS THERE ARE SOME ISSUES ON WHICH WE THINK

ISRAEL WILL HAVE TO MAKE FURTHER ADJUSTMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. BEGIN OPENED THIS PORTION OF OUR MEETING BY REFERRING TO THE SECRETARY'S PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT THAT THERE SHOULD BE A HOMELAND FOR THE PALESTINIANS ON THE WEST BANK AND THAT IT SHOULD BE LINKED WITH JORDAN. BEGIN SAID IN THE ISRAELI PERCEPTION THIS MEANS INEVITABLY A PALESTINIANS STATE. HE REHEARSED HIS OLD ARGUMENT ABOUT ISRAELIS BEING PALESTINIANS TOO, ENDING WITH THE ASSURANCE THAT "WE SPEAK ABOUT REALITIES". A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND LINKED WITH JORDAN WOULD MEAN A "MID-56 :9, 53))-58?, ?" *94:3 " SURROUNDING ISRAEL.

3. HE THEN MOVED ON TO HIS CENTRAL POINT. HE NOTED THAT IN HIS FEBRUARY 10 PRESS CONFERENCE THE SECRETARY HAD REFERRED TO "WITHDRAWAL ON ALL FRONTS". HE ASKED RHETORICALLY WHERE THIS IS TO BE FOUND IN 242. NEITHER, HE ADDED, ARE PALESTINIANS MENTIONED IN 242. SPEAKING WITH CONSIDERABLE EMOTION, HE SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT IS CHANGING THE MEANING OF 242 ON ITS OWN INITIATIVE. WHY, HE ASKED, SHOULD THIS BE DONE WITHOUT ANY PRIOR CONSULTATION? SUCH AN INTERPRETATION OF 242 WOULD PUT ISRAEL IN "THE GRAVEST JEOPARDY" FROM THE SECURITY STANDPOINT. ISRAEL WOULD HAVE "THE ORANGE POISONERS" NINE MILES FROM THE SEA, "WITH JORDAN AND THE ARAB LEGION BACKED BY SYRIA, IRAQ AND SAUDI ARABIA".

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4. OBSERVING THAT I DID NOT HAVE THE ADVANTAGE THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAD OF BEING INTIMATELY VERSED IN ALL THE INTRICACIES OF THIS DISPUTE BECAUSE OF THEIR YEARS OF EXPOSURE, I SAID I NEVERTHELESS BELIEVED THAT THROUGHOUT THE DEBATES PRECEDING THE ADOPTION OF 242, AND THROUGH ALL THE STATEMENTS SINCE, NEITHER ISRAEL NOR THE US HAD ACCEPTED AN INTERPRETATION OF 242 THAT IT REQUIRES FOR TOTAL WITHDRAWAL. IT HAD, HOWEVER, ALWAYS BEEN OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT 242 CALLS FOR AT LEAST SOME WITHDRAWAL ON ALL THREE FRONTS. IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THIS INTERPRETATION WAS ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED BY EVERY ISRAELI GOVERNMENT FROM 1967 THROUGH 1977. IT WAS OUR ASSUMPTION THAT WHEN THE LIKUD GOVERNMENT ACCEPTED 242 IT ALSO ACCEPTED THIS INTERPRETATION. I SAID FIRMLY AND DISTINCTLY THAT IF THIS IS NOT THE CASE, THEN THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS POINT OF DIFFERENCE AND WE OUGHT TO KNOW ABOUT IT.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2031

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

WHITE HOUSE FOR BRZEZINSKI

5. BEGIN REPLIED BY INSISTING THAT HE HAD TOLD PRESIDENT CARTER "UPSTAIRS" AT THE WHITE HOUSE THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT PUT "JUDEA AND SAMARIA" UNDER FOREIGN RULE. I REJOINED BY REPEATING AGAIN THAT IT SURELY COULD NOT BE A SURPRISE THAT WE INTERPRET 242 AS APPLYING TO ALL FRONTS. BEGIN SAID THAT THE SURPRISE ARISES FROM THIS STATEMENT BEING MADE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, WITHOUT CONSULTATION AND IN CONNECTION WITH SADAT'S VISIT. I ASKED BEGIN WHY HE THOUGHT KING HUSSEIN SHOULD JOIN THE NEGOTIATIONS IF ISRAEL WOULD GIVE NO INDICATION THAT IT WAS PREPARED TO WITHDRAW ON THE WEST BANK AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE. THERE WAS NO REPLY. BEGIN THEN SAID HE WANTED TO SUM UP THE GOI'S POSITION. (ACTUALLY, WHAT HE SUMMED UP WAS HIS OBVIOUS FRUSTRATION AT THE SUCCESS SADAT HAD ENJOYED IN THE U.S.) BEGIN REMINDED US THAT HE HAD NOT UTTERED ONE WORD AGAINST SADAT DURING HIS WASHINGTON VISIT. BUT, HE SAID, SADAT HAD ATTACKED ISRAEL "VIOLENTLY" AT THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB AND ATTACKED HIM AT CAMP DAVID.(SIC). HE TROTTED OUT AS WELL THE BY NOW INFAMOUS MISUNDERSTANDING OVER EGYPTIAN FORCES EAST OF THE PASSES, SAYING THAT FIRST SADAT GAVE HIM A PROMISE AND NOW CLAIMS THAT BEGIN IS PUTTING

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WORDS IN HIS MOUTH. HE COMPLAINED OF SADAT TALKING OF INTERNATIONALIZING JERUSALEM, A SUBJECT HE CLAIMED HAS BEEN "DEAD SINCE 1947" ("EVEN THE POPE HAD NOT RAISED THIS WITH

DAYAN.") HE COMPLAINED THAT ISRAEL IS BEING ACCUSED IN THE U.S. OF "BARGAINING", THAT NEITHER THE PRESIDENT NOR THE SECRETARY HAS YET SEEN DAYAN, WHILE MEANWHILE SADAT IS RECEIVING ENCOURAGEMENT ON POINTS THAT ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE ESPOUSED BY THE "REJECTIONISTS." ISRAEL IS NOT EVEN BEING GIVEN A HEARING, WHILE SADAT CAN BOAST THAT HE HAS U.S. SUPPORT. THIS IS UNFAIR, BEGIN CONCLUDED PLAINTIVELY, AND NO WAY TO DO JUSTICE.

6. WE HAD BEEN AT IT FOR NEARLY TWO HOURS BY THIS TIME, AND MY DIPLOMATIC ARMOR WAS WEARING THIN. I SAID TO BEGIN BLUNTLY AND RATHER SHARPLY THAT I REALLY DID NOT UNDERSTAND HOW HE COULD SAY THAT ISRAEL HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN A FAIR HEARING. HE PERSONALLY SAW THE PRESIDENT IN DECEMBER AND THE SECRETARY WAS HERE IN ISRAEL FOR SEVERAL DAYS IN JANUARY. THE ISRAELI POINT OF VIEW HAS BEEN DISCUSSED FREQUENTLY AND THOROUGHLY WITH AMERICAN LEADERS AND THEY HAVE RECEIVED COMPREHENSIVE REPORTS OF ALL OUR CONVERSATIONS TOGETHER. WHAT, I ASKED HIM, WOULD HE HAVE WANTED US TO DO DIFFERENTLY OVER THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS? BEGIN REPLIED, ALMOST SADLY, THAT HE WANTED ME TO PROVE THAT HE IS A "DECENT MAN" WHO DOES NOT MISLEAD ANYBODY. I ASSURED HIM THAT HE IS KNOWN AS A DECENT MAN. HE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT JUST BECAUSE SADAT SAYS SOMETHING, THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE U.S. ACCEPTS IT AS THE GOSPEL. I SAID HE SHOULD HAVE MORE FAITH IN US. IN THE MOST REVEALING STATEMENT OF THE EVENING BEGIN RESPONDED: "NOW OPINION IN THE U.S. IS SWAYED IN FAVOR OF SADAT."

7. I TRIED TO WRAP UP THIS PART OF THE CONVERSATION ON AS POSITIVE AND REASSURING NOTE AS POSSIBLE. I TOLD BEGIN
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THAT OUR POSITIONS HAVE NOT CHANGED AS A RESULT OF THE SADAT VISIT, BUT HAVE REMAINED CONSISTENT FOR THE PAST SIX MONTHS. I REMINDED HIM THE PRESIDENT HAD SAID LAST SPRING THAT A SETTLEMENT WOULD HAVE TO PROVIDE A "HOMELAND FOR THE PALESTINIANS" AND THERE IS NO REASON TO THINK HIS MIND HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN. I SAID I THOUGHT IT WAS UNFAIR AND INACCURATE TO CHARGE THAT WE HAD CHANGED OUR POSITIONS SIMPLY BECAUSE THE SECRETARY RESTATED KNOWN AMERICAN POSITIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF SADAT'S VISIT. ON THE CONTRARY, I INSISTED, WE HAVE BEEN FAIR AND FORTHRIGHT. WE ACCEPT THE ISRAELI POSITION ON MANY ELEMENTS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. BUT THERE ARE FRANKLY SOME ISSUES ON WHICH WE THINK ISRAEL WILL HAVE TO MAKE FURTHER ADJUSTMENTS IF THE CHANCE FOR PEACE IS NOT TO BE LOST.

8. BEGIN SAID HE WANTED TO BE SURE THAT THE SECRETARY AND THE PRESIDENT WERE MADE FULLY AWARE OF WHAT HE HAD SAID. I TOLD BEGIN THAT I WOULD RELAY HIS PROTESTS BUT THAT I HONESTLY COULD NOT AGREE WITH HIM. "YOU CAN'T?", HE ASKED. "I

CAN'T," I REPEATED. I URGED THAT WE NOT HAVE A CRISIS
AT THIS TIME WHEN THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO GET BACK
ON THE TRACK WITH NEGOTIATIONS. BUT BEGIN INSISTED ON
THE FINAL WORD, QUESTIONING AGAIN WHETHER THERE CAN REALLY
BE "FREE" NEGOTIATIONS NOW. HE CONCLUDED WITH "THIS IS A
VERY SERIOUS MOMENT IN OUR LIVES."
LEWIS

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